

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A license management method for contents-
processing software for downloading contents data from
a computer to an electronic device in a state in which
the computer is connected to the electronic device,
comprising the steps of:

determining, by the electronic device, upon
receiving an acquisition request of license data
necessary for installing the software or executing a
specific function of the software, whether or not
license data is issued by referring to management data
indicating issue status of license data, stored in a
secret area in the electronic device; and

controlling permission or inhibition of issuing
the license data stored in the secret area in the
electronic device based on the determination result.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein
the control step controls to issue the license
data to the computer when the determination result
indicates that the license data has not been issued,
and to inhibit the issuance of the license data when
the determination result indicates that the license
data has been issued.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein
ID data for identifying a computer which has
issued the license data is registered as the management
data in the secret area, and

permission or inhibition of issuing the license data for the acquisition request is determined by the controller of the electronic device, on the basis of whether the ID data has not been registered and whether the ID data is coincident with ID data of the computer which has issued the acquisition request.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein a plurality of memory areas for registering a plurality of ID data are prepared in the secret area.

5. A method according to claim 1, further comprising returning a content of the management data to a state preceding issue of the license data in response to an uninstall notification of the software that is issued from the computer to the electronic device.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic device includes a contents playback device for recording and playing back contents transferred from the computer, and

the software has a function of managing contents transfer to the electronic device.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein the software uses license data in the electronic device to perform authentication of whether the electronic device is rightful, and when authentication succeeds, transfers contents to the electronic device.

8. An electronic device capable of recording or

playing back contents downloaded from a computer,
comprising:

means for storing license data necessary for
installing software for contents transfer from the
5 computer to a contents playback device, or executing a
specific function of the software, and management data
for managing an issue history of the license data; and

means for, upon reception of a license data
acquisition request from a computer connected to the
10 contents playback device, determining permission or
inhibition of issuing the license data for the
acquisition request on the basis of the management data.

9. A device according to claim 8, further
comprising:

15 means for returning a content of the management
data to a state preceding issue of the license data in
response to an uninstall notification of the software
from the computer to the electronic device.

10. A computer-readable recording medium which
20 records a computer program installed and used in a
computer, wherein the computer program includes:

a procedure of, in installing the computer program
or executing a specific function of the computer
program, requesting acquisition of license data of an
25 electronic device which stores license data necessary
for installing the computer program or executing the
specific function, and management data for managing an

issue history of the license data; and

a procedure of permitting the install or the execution of the specific function on a condition that rightful license data is acquired from the electronic device.

11. A license management method for a contents playback device, comprising the steps of:

requesting, in installing a computer program or executing a specific function of the computer program, acquisition of license data of an electronic device which stores license data necessary for installing the computer program or executing the specific function, and management data for managing an issue history of the license data; and

permitting the install or the execution of the specific function on a condition that the rightful license data is acquired from the electronic device.